

# IT ALL ADDS UP

*Zechariah: Four Commands That Add Up to Loving God and Others*

## PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Zechariah 7:8-14 and 8:14-17.

## SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

James 1:22-27

## OBJECTIVES

1. THINK: Understand that all of God's commands should be obeyed.
2. TODAY: Commit to not harden your heart or turn a deaf ear to the commands of God.
3. APPLY: Commit to live for God by making daily decisions to obey Him.

## OVERVIEW

This lesson looks at the words of the prophet Zechariah to Israel. In chapters 7 and 8 Zechariah confronts Israel for their refusal to obey several specific commands, but he also shares that God promises to forgive them and bless them. Zechariah reminds them of God's original commands and reminds them that God hates it when we disobey and that obedience demonstrates a love for God. The 4 commands are stated as the 4 points of the main teaching for this lesson.

## GETTING THINGS STARTED

If you ever take a speech class in high school or college, you'll be asked to write and present several types of short speeches, usually an autobiographical, persuasive, and informative speech. The informative speech is a "how to" presentation where you teach the audience how to do something.

Break up in groups of 2 or 3, and take 3-5 minutes to prepare a short, 30 second informative speech for our group that has exactly 4 steps. In 4 steps, tell us how to do something you know how to do. Ride a motorcycle, prepare a PB and J sandwich, cut a class without getting caught (that was a joke), find a sweet deal when shopping, etc.

Today we are going to look at a Bible passage where God expects us to do four things if we are going to live for Him. Consider it God's "how to" speech.

# IT ALL ADDS UP

*Zechariah: Four Commands That Add Up to Loving God and Others*

## TEACHING GUIDE

Jesus boiled the Old Testament law down to one sentence we know as the great commandment: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength.”* He then added a second, *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* He also said that all the law and the prophets hang on these two things (Matthew 22:37-40).

While this might be the most significant summary of God’s word for us, it is not the only place in Scripture where a list of God’s instructions are summarized. One similar list is found in Zechariah 7:9-10 that is repeated in part in James 1:27. It’s not the longest list of commands—not even close. But it is among some of the shortest summaries of a Godly lifestyle. Let’s examine it together.

Read Zechariah 7:8-14 and 8:14-17. (If you have the time and a more Biblically literate group, you may want to just read all of chapters 7 and 8.)

## LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

- **Be honest**

The city gates were a place where people would come to settle disputes. Elders of the town would sit in a chair called the judgment seat and make decisions after hearing people state their case. God says those decisions should not involve favoritism or deceit, but truth. This is true for not just the Old Testament judgment seat, but all our lives today. A mouth that speaks truth is a Godly mouth.

- **Share mercy**

One of the things God has clearly done with each of us is show mercy. We have wronged God too many times to count and the fact that He has withheld judgment is truly amazing. Since mercy is therefore something we have been given by God, it is something we must share with others. If we are to be God’s people, we must be merciful.

## IT ALL ADDS UP

### *Zechariah: Four Commands That Add Up to Loving God and Others*

- **Care for the neglected**

One of the truths in the Bible is that God has a very large heart for the poor, neglected, and abandoned in our world. Part of the law He gave Moses insured that money and food be set aside for people who needed it. The story of Ruth and her interaction with Boaz is a demonstration of this command in action. Proverbs 14:31 goes so far as to say that if we neglect the poor, we show contempt for God himself. This is no small deal with God. It is at the core of what it means to follow Him.

- **Turn from evil**

One of the reasons Satan picked Job as the one to in such an extreme way is because Job 1:8 says that he was a man who feared God and shunned evil. He had no interest in Satan or his ways. Perhaps, we could define holiness as the absolute absence of evil. Zechariah 8:17 says, God hates evil. And since God has called each of us to be holy, this means that our lives should be absent of evil. As Paul said in Romans 12:9, “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good.”

### **DISCUSSING THE TEXT**

- The reason the nation of Israel was not doing these four things was not because they didn't know they were supposed to, it was because they deliberately chose to “stop up their ears” (vs. 11). What does this mean? In your own words, how does one stop listening to God? Do you think if we stop listening, God stops speaking too? Why or why not?
- Another thing they did was to “harden their hearts” (vs. 12). What does this imagery mean? What does a hard heart look like? What does a soft heart look like? How do you seek to keep your heart soft?
- When you read in 8:17 that God hates evil, what image of God does this put in your head?
- Read James 1:22-27. How does this text define someone who is following God? What character traits are both Zechariah and James calling us to have?

# IT ALL ADDS UP

*Zechariah: Four Commands That Add Up to Loving God and Others*

## APPLYING THE TEXT

- Who do you need to give mercy to? Why is it hard for you to do this? What can you do today or this week?
- It seems ridiculous that someone would desire evil. But we all do. What is it about evil that makes something so horrible, sometimes seem so desirable? What is the evil desire that you most often have to chase out of your thoughts and actions? How can we help you be successful?
- How do you care for the poor? Are there regular patterns in your life where you help meet the needs of those who are often neglected in our world today? (For example, feed the homeless, sponsor a child, volunteer at a shelter, donate your clothes, etc.)
- How does it feel to be lied to? Is this something you struggle with yourself? When is it easiest to “justify” a lie and not tell someone the truth? Is there someone you need to confess to this week?

## FOR KEEPS (MEMORY VERSE)

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*  
(James 1:27 TNIV).